

Television System

This invention relates to a television system including at least a display screen provided with, or connected to, a broadcast data receiver. The broadcast data receiver (BDR) receives and processes video, audio and/or auxiliary data generated by a broadcaster from a remote location, to a plurality of said BDR's.

Conventionally, at least some of the video data processed by the BDR relates to television or radio programmes being shown on particular channels. An electronic or interactive programme guide (EPG) display is selectively generated on the display screen using auxiliary data processed by the BDR. The EPG provides programme schedules and listings for a particular period of time for the available channels. EPGs are becoming increasingly useful in place of conventional newspaper or magazine based television listings as the number of available channels on digital television increases and thus the number of programmes available for viewing also increases.

In use, when a viewer is watching a particular programme which is one of a larger series of related programmes, the viewer may wish to know when the next episode of the programme is due to be shown. However, even though the EPG display is available, as a result of the large number of programmes available for selection for viewing, even if the viewer uses the EPG to look for the time of the next episode in the series, it typically takes the viewer some time to identify the next episode.

In addition, the same programme is often repeated a number of times and it is again time consuming for the viewer to look through the EPG or other TV listings to identify which of the next showings of their selected programme are repeats of

previous episode that they have already watched and which are the showings of the next episode of the programme series that they have just watched. Thus the viewer may end up watching a repeat of an earlier episode, miss the next episode and/or the like. In some cases the television presenter may announce at the end of the programme when the next episode of the programme is to be shown but in many cases this does not occur. Furthermore, if the programme a viewer has just watched is a repeat of an earlier showing, the announcement at the end of the programme may be pre-recorded and therefore out of date.

It is therefore an aim of the present invention to provide a means of allowing a user to quickly and easily determine when the showing of the next episode of a programme is scheduled and/or the channel location of the same.

According to a first aspect of the present invention there is provided a television system including a broadcast data receiver (BDR) for receiving broadcast digital data in the form of audio, video and/or auxiliary data from a remote broadcaster and processing said data to allow video and text to be viewed on a display screen connected to the BDR, said video and text including details of programmes available for selection by a viewer and characterised in that when a programme which is selected for viewing is part of a series of programmes, at a predetermined time point during or at the end of the selected programme, an indication is generated by the BDR to inform the viewer of details the scheduled display of next episode of the said series of programmes.

Preferably the indication of when the next episode is being shown is based on information provided in an electronic programme guide (EPG) display on the display screen.

In one embodiment the indication is generated when the BDR detects the end of the selected programme and, the BDR searches or has already searched through EPG data in the BDR and identifies the scheduled showing of next episode of the programme series. The BDR then generates the indication, to indicate, typically in text, but also possibly audibly, to the viewer the time, date and channel location for the viewing of the next programme in the series.

In an alternative embodiment, data relating to the scheduled showing of the next episode of the programme series is broadcast by the broadcaster in conjunction with the data stream for the selected programme whereupon an indication is generated at the end of the programme by the BDR in response to the received data.

The EPG is typically generated from auxiliary data broadcast from a broadcaster.

Preferably the indication can include any or any combination of the date when the next episode is to be shown, the time at which the next episode is to be shown, the channel on which the next episode is to be shown, a description of the content of the next episode and/or the like.

If the next episode is to be repeated a number of times over a time period, the indication can include details of all showings of the next episode, the earliest showing of the next episode and/or the like.

Preferably the indication includes details of the showing of the next episode of the programme which does not overlap with any

other bookmarked programmes previously selected by the viewer and stored in the EPG.

In one embodiment the indication is in the form of a message displayed on the display screen, and overlaid on the video data displayed at that time.

Further preferably the message is provided on a semi-transparent background at an edge of the display screen to prevent obstruction of the video being shown on the display screen.

Preferably, on display of the message on the display screen, the viewer has the option of hiding the message by using an appropriate control key on control means provided.

In an alternative embodiment the indication is in the form of an audio message generated automatically by the BDR via speakers connected thereto and, from information based on EPG data.

Preferably once the viewer has listened to or has viewed the indication, the viewer can set a reminder so that the BDR informs them when the next episode is to be shown at a time nearer the scheduled showing of the next episode. This is typically performed by depression of one or more keys on control means, such as a remote control device for use with the television system.

Further preferably a user can recall the message providing details of the next episode prior to the scheduled showing of the episode by depression of a pre-selected key on the control means.

Preferably the indication which is generated is displayed for a period of time determined by the user and/or broadcaster.

Preferably the user is provided with an option of switching the next episode indication service on or off.

In one embodiment the indication also includes information relating to when a repeat of the programme just viewed is to be shown.

According to a second aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of indicating to a viewer when the scheduled showing of the next episode or episodes in a series of television programmes is/are to occur on a television system, said television system including a BDR for receiving broadcast digital data in the form of audio, video and/or auxiliary data from a remote broadcaster and processing said data for viewing on a display screen and/or listening via speakers connected to the BDR, characterised in that said method includes the steps of the BDR identifying whether a series of programmes exist for a programme selected for viewing on the system, the BDR searching received schedule data for the next episode in the selected programme series and, if an episode is identified the BDR then generates an indication to inform the viewer of when the next episode of the programme is to be shown.

The present invention has the advantage that the user can quickly and easily determine when the next episode of a particular programme series is to be shown, without having to manually look through television schedules/listings to obtain the information.

An embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to the following figure:

Figure 1 is an example of a television system according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 2 illustrates the television system in use in accordance with the invention; and

Figure 3 illustrates one display generated in accordance with the invention.

Referring to figure 1, there is illustrated a television system including a display screen 2 connected to a broadcast data receiver 4. The television system has an electronic programme guide (EPG) 8 which displays television programme listings and/or schedules for a particular time period, 10.

In accordance with the invention, if a viewer is watching a programme which is part of a television programme series of related programmes, a display 6 as shown in Figure 2, is generated by the BDR. The display contains a message on the display screen at the end of the selected programme being viewed, informing the viewer of the date and time of when the next episode of the series is to be shown and the channel on which the next programme is to be shown.

In addition, a brief description of what is being shown in the next episode of the programme can also be provided in the display.

The display, in this embodiment, is semi-transparent and appears at the edge of display screen 2 so that it does not

obstruct the viewer's vision of the video being shown on the display screen. However, the viewer can change the position of the window 6 if required.

The window typically appears on the display screen for a short period of time, such as 10 seconds.

The viewer can hide the indication if required or select an option from an options menu in the EPG to switch the indication off. Typically the viewer can also select the details provided in the reminder message using the options menu. For example, the viewer can choose whether to be provided with a brief description of what the next episode is about. This allows the viewer to decide whether to set a reminder to be informed nearer the time of the next episode that the programme is about to start or has started.

The viewer typically uses a remote control device to select options such as, to hide the indication display; set a reminder in the EPG to be informed of the next showing of the episode and/or display details of the times, channels and dates of all the showings of the next programme episode.

In a practical example, if a viewer is watching a selected programme titled "Horizon" on BBC Knowledge, then towards the end of the programme the BDR searches through received programme schedule data. In one embodiment the received data for the selected programme indicates that it is part of a series and when the next programme is scheduled to be shown. From that data the BDR can display a message as described. Alternatively the BDR can identify the selected programme and search through the received EPG data to identify the same programme title and when it is next due to be viewed. In either

embodiment, if there is a further programme in the same programme series as the selected programme "Horizon", a display 106 is displayed on the screen to inform the user of when that next episode of the Horizon programme series is to be shown as illustrated in Figure 3. The message indicates that the next episode 112 is to be shown four times 114, 116, 118, 120 every day for the next week. The user then selects a reminder for one of the showings 116 so that they are informed of when the selected showing is due to start.

Thus the present invention allows the user to more easily plan their viewing for a particular time period without having to consult other television listings/schedules. The user can then use other features of the EPG or television system to set reminders, add the episode to a favourites schedule and/or the like.